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STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

Capitol Update by Senator Howard Marklein July 10, 2015

Summarizing the State Budget

The Wisconsin Legislature passed the 2015-2017 biennial budget and it is now bound for Governor Scott Walker's review, veto pen and signature. As a member of the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), I have spent the last six months studying the details, making tough decisions and advocating for the needs of the 17th Senate District and the people of Wisconsin.

While I know not all of our actions were popular, I believe that we made fair decisions based on our resources, projected revenues and all of the needs of the State of Wisconsin over the next biennium.

The State Budget process is not easy. I didn't expect it to be. Every resident of our state has their own view of our priorities and it is a challenge to fairly allocate and manage our resources to answer the diverse voices in our state.

When it is all said and done, I am proud of our work. This budget has less bonding (borrowing) than any budget in the last three decades. We froze property taxes and University System tuition. We restored funding for K-12 education and allocated an additional \$100 per pupil in the second year of the biennium. **Wisconsin has now seen three budgets in a row that do not increase our property or income taxes!**

In addition to these major elements, following are other positive things we were able to do in this budget:

Transportation - We reduced bonding from \$1.3 billion to \$500 million. The core of the Zoo Interchange project in Milwaukee will be completed, but the third phase will be delayed. We also decided that an additional \$350 million in bonding could be available at the discretion of the JFC.

Especially important for the 17th Senate District this summer – we changed vehicle registration requirements to allow vintage and antique tractors to travel on highways to participate in parades and tractor club events and maintained funding for the program to remove deer roadkill from WI roadways.

Education – We added \$200 million to K-12 education funding, restored the \$150 per pupil aid and added \$100 more per pupil in the second year. More than \$10.6 billion is invested into public education over the next biennium.

Especially important for the rural schools of the 17th Senate District – we added an additional \$8.4 million over the biennium to Sparsity Aid (qualifying districts would need an enrollment of less than 725 pupils and a population density of less than 10 pupils per square mile). We also added an additional \$5 million over the biennium to High Cost Transportation Aid (qualifying districts would need a population

density of less than 50 pupils per square mile and transportation costs greater than 150% of the state average).

We expanded the school choice program statewide to provide parents with choices where they are needed and revised the program so that education funding follows the child. We gave school districts the opportunity to employ and license individuals with a technical background to teach technical education courses.

Healthcare – We maintained the SeniorCare program. We kept Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) local. We gave Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) the opportunity to upgrade and be a part of a new, regional system of long term care which maintains our existing system while we required the Department of Health Services (DHS) to develop a plan to address the needs of our aging population with stakeholder input.

We allocated an extra ombudsman for the Board on Aging & Long Term Care for the State Veterans Home. We added \$100,000 to the Wisconsin Well Woman Program for cervical and cancer screenings. We required a study and presentation related to consolidating county and community mental health programs.

We allocated \$250,000 for county government to implement anti-fraud measures for entitlement programs and created a program for drug testing public benefit recipients.

Especially important for rural health – we provided a \$40,000 grant for advanced life support training to doctors, physician's assistants, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and paramedics in rural hospitals and clinics and we expanded Disproportionate Share Hospital (DSH) funding which is intended to provide supplemental reimbursement for hospitals that serve relatively high numbers of medical assistance recipients and uninsured, low-income patients. Most of the hospitals in the 17th Senate District qualify for DSH funding.

Economic Development – We reinvested \$250,000 from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) into a revolving loan program for Prosperity Southwest WI to serve Grant, Lafayette, Green, Richland and Crawford counties and redirected \$12 million to be invested in economic development in legislative initiatives rather than WEDC programs.

Public Safety – We added a grant for \$50,000 per year for the Lafayette County Sheriff's Department to hire an officer dedicated to drug law enforcement. We added \$630,000 for four positions in the Wisconsin Attorney General's office to conduct officer involved incident investigations. We allocated an additional \$100,000 for the sexual assault victim services grant program.

Natural Resources & Agriculture – We reinstated the Stewardship Program and created a sustainable plan in which all sale of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land would have a 50/50 split with funds going to Stewardship Program debt service and the acquisition of new land. The DNR currently has 10,000 acres for sale!

I authored a motion for the state parks account that would improve the financial condition of the state park system. We also required the DNR to study ways for the state parks to increase revenue and manage resources for continued sustainability. We maintained the roles of the Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection (DATCP) and Natural Resources Boards.

Especially important for the 17th Senate District, we reinstated the Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment System (POWTS) grant program through the Wisconsin Fund.

Taxes – My goals in leading the discussion of the tax elements of the budget were fairness and simplification. We increased the standard deduction for married filers to reduce the marriage penalty. This amounted to a \$21 million tax cut statewide with \$19 million of relief going to couples who make less than \$100k per year! This tax cut impacts thousands of middle-class families in our state.

We also federalized the deduction for teacher school supplies. In addition, we created the statewide Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act that allows a family member of someone with special needs to create a tax-free account for their loved one with special needs for future expenses.

University of Wisconsin System – We restored \$50 million of the original \$300 million cut to the university system. We froze tuition for two years. We granted flexibilities to the UW System for procurement while maintaining current UW System structure. ***For the 17th District directly*** – we gave UW-Platteville the ability to negotiate lease agreements which is estimated to save the campus \$250,000 per year and approved \$15 million for the Williams Fieldhouse addition.

Especially important for the 17th Senate District – We invested funds to establish the Frank Lloyd Wright Heritage Trail that will run from Racine to Richland Center in honor of Frank Lloyd Wright. We allocated \$6 million over the next four years from the Universal Service Fund (USF) for broadband expansion grants for local communities and maintained current law for the Local Government Property Insurance Fund (LGPIF) with a directive to study already completed. We added an \$80,000 grant to Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for abused and neglected children that need representation in court. We reversed the reorganization of assessment in our state and kept it local.

We restored \$1.6 million in funding and 8.6 positions for the Educational Communications Board for Wisconsin Public Television (WPT) and Wisconsin Public Radio (WPR).

The Bucks Arena – this item was removed from the budget and will be debated as a separate piece of legislation. I continue to study the proposal, ask questions and seek input from the residents of the 17th Senate District. For more information, please visit <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein/media/1093/61215-bucks-arena-deal.pdf> to read more about my analysis of the Bucks Arena proposal.

As my first budget as a member of the JFC, I have a much better understanding of the process, opportunities and intricacies that go into crafting the state budget. I appreciated all of the input, ideas and concerns expressed by the residents of the 17th Senate District and was proud to be able to bring one of the Spring Budget Hearings to our district for the first time in decades.

Over the next several weeks, I intend to dig deeper into several areas of the budget and provide an analysis with more in-depth detail. Overall, I am proud of our work and will continue to advocate for the unique needs and priorities of the 17th Senate District as we prepare for the fall legislative session that begins in September.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have input, ideas or need assistance with any state-related matters.